IN THE FACE OF “JIM CROW”:
PROSPEROUS BLACKS AND
VACATIONS, TRAVEL AND OUTDOOR
LEISURE, 1890-1945

By
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In the summer of 1870, the nation’s most famous ex-slave and revered abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, wrote to an associate, “Heretofore, colored Americans have thought little of adorning their parlors with pictures. They have to do with the stern, and I may say, the ugly realities of life. Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement.”1 When Douglass penned these lines, the vast majority of ex-slaves had experienced only five years of freedom. There were stories of a few fabulously successful blacks, most of whom had earned their freedom years, even decades earlier. However, the average freedman worked long hours for little more than subsistence wages. In the eyes of whites, and perhaps for many blacks as well, any thoughts of significant black leisure appeared far-fetched, even unnatural.

In the late nineteenth century, however, determined blacks found ways to enjoy leisure, and this often irritated whites. Such “conflict” provided part of the backdrop for the famous Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896 which institutionalized segregation in public accommodations until 1954. Prosperous blacks from New Orleans were arranging large group excursions by rail to resort areas along the Gulf Coast. The presence of significant numbers of well-dressed blacks enjoying themselves offended some whites, who pressured the railroads to enforce state segregation laws. In response, a group of well-connected blacks, supported by liberal white friends, sued the railroads. This eventually led to the famous decision, which allowed “separate but equal” public accommodations.2 A century ago, “Jim Crow” segregation became the law of the nation.

Despite all of the obstacles and prejudice they faced, by the late nineteenth century several thousand blacks nationwide had established distinguished careers, prosperous businesses, comfortable homes, and impressive incomes and investment portfolios.3 Comparatively little attention has been paid to them. Aside from biographies of distinguished blacks, most scholars have concentrated on the masses of blacks who suffered relentless oppression, grinding poverty, and distressingly narrow opportunities for improving their circumstances during the “Jim Crow” era. Certainly the experiences of the downtrodden deserve attention, but so do lives of those who defied all the odds and gained wealth. How could affluent blacks spend their disposable income? Under

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what conditions were they able to enjoy the fruits of their labor? How did their participation in some of the most easily identifiable public leisure activities compare to that experienced by whites?

This essay probes certain diversions enjoyed by “well-heeled” blacks between 1890 and 1945. The beginning of the period marked the years in which Jim Crow laws were most rigorously enforced. A half-century later, the profound moral challenges of World War II helped trigger the start of the modern Civil Rights Movement. I will examine black participation in pursuits which were largely intended to separate the spheres of work and play: travel, vacations, resort activities, and camping. I will also explore their pursuit of golf and tennis, two sports often considered elitist, at least before World War II. The essay will conclude with a brief look at blacks and the bicycle craze of the late nineteenth century.

Several related topics are beyond the scope of this study. Numerous scholars have analyzed the evolution of black “society.” Nearly all have observed that blacks could almost never achieve total relaxation, but that they came closest to doing so when there were no whites around. It is hardly surprising that successful blacks did all they could to insulate themselves, and particularly their children, from unpleasant confrontations with whites. They often entertained lavishly in their own homes rather than in public. Several historians have also observed that late nineteenth century blacks at least matched whites in their enthusiasm for fraternal organizations and service clubs. Scholars examining their activities behind the walls of these organizations find it extremely difficult to distinguish between work and play. Blacks were equally committed to establishing separate, private educational institutions. The academic quality of the schools varied widely. The leading black colleges and universities, and a few preparatory schools, maintained rigorous standards, but some so-called “colleges” were little more than high schools. Several colleges frankly promoted themselves as finishing schools, intended primarily to teach social graces to upwardly mobile black women.

Throughout this period, blacks used a variety of public conveyances for travel, where they routinely experienced rude treatment and the most demeaning forms of discrimination. Despite such stresses and repeated affronts to their dignity, blacks traveled for pleasure as well as business. Like their affluent white counterparts, well-to-do blacks eagerly pursued the finer things in life. Historian Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., noted that “a few aristocrats of color had sufficient resources for European tours,” citing a dozen or so families which made extended journeys abroad. Some blacks who went overseas sought at least temporary relief from the suffocating racism affecting the United States late in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A few even found their dreams fulfilled. In his autobiographical musings, writer Claude McKay rhapsodized over the joys of visiting certain European countries where the races were thoroughly mixed. “For the first time in my life, I felt myself singularly free of all color consciousness. I experienced a feeling that must be akin to the physical well-being of a dumb animal among kindred animals, who live instinctively and by sensations only, without thinking.” Madam E. Azalia Hackley, an internationally renowned musician, spent many years abroad. She felt much freer to live her own lifestyle in Paris, which she considered “a garden spot for Negros.” Mary Church Terrell like-
wise recounted her European travels at length, stressing the preponderance of occasions in which she experienced no discrimination whatsoever.9

While foreign travel was clearly a luxury reserved for those with considerable means, middle-class blacks were also being targeted by ambitious travel companies hoping to expand their business. As early as 1911, the official magazine of the newly-formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Crisis, published an article by Virginia Wright titled "The Congo Express." Wright summarized the experiences of black American travelers to Africa; from her perspective, most of them were essentially seeking their roots. Her account was clearly promotional in tone, designed to interest other blacks in international travel. Through the 1910s and 1920s The Crisis was liberally sprinkled with advertisements by various steamship companies and travel agencies pushing attractive "package" tours abroad. For example, in the June, 1923 issue, the Great Northern Steamship Company offered round trips from Boston to England or the European continent at fares ranging from $110 to $138. The company was obviously in the formative stages, as it sought not only passengers but also investors. Hoping to carry as many as 2,000 passengers each month, the promoters claimed to be "... building for a permanent business, setting new standards of high-class ocean travel on a one-class basis."10

Indicative of the ambitiousness of those pushing black travel and leisure, five years later inducements for European tours were directed toward black Americans somewhat farther down the economic ladder. An advertisement for the American Service Institute of Beckley, West Virginia, offered "FREE" trips to Europe: "Everybody is going to Europe now. Sail with a fine group of cultured people. Glorious itinerary offered. We make the trip possible and pay all expenses." The only requirement was that the prospective traveler had to gain sufficient "votes," which were awarded when that individual sold a large quantity of "more than 20 guaranteed household necessities at popular prices..." A few months before the stock market crash in 1929 the magazine identified two groups which "especially invite colored people" to participate in journeys to the Soviet Union: the Hampton Institute and Open Road.11 With the exception of a few dozen black "Gold Star" mothers, who accepted the United States government's invitation to visit the graves of doughboy sons killed in World War I, there is no evidence that mass excursions by large numbers of blacks occurred. What is significant is that the concept was promoted seriously in the 1920s.

At the turn-of-the-century exotic overseas journeys were still largely confined to the famous, or fortunate of the darker race, plus black servants. Frederick Douglass traveled extensively in Europe and various countries on the Mediterranean as early as the 1840s. Initially, his journeys were clearly working trips, since he was an exceedingly busy and sought-after spokesman for the Abolitionist cause. Only in the 1870s and 1880s, did he travel primarily for pleasure. In 1899 some of the "best people" of both races raised money so that another black leader, Booker T. Washington, could take a trip to Europe. Washington initially expressed feelings of guilt in accepting such largesse: "I could not see how my conscience would permit me to spare the time from my work and be happy. It seemed mean and selfish in me to be taking a vacation while others were at work, and while there was so much that needed to be done."12 Washington eventually overcame such scruples and undertook the journey; he soon discovered that his first so-called "vacation" in eighteen years entailed a considerable
amount of work. He felt constantly on display as a spokesman for his race. His benefactors had arranged many public lectures for him in England.

Young W. E. B. DuBois, who would soon emerge as Washington's formidable rival in terms of articulating strategies from advancing the black race, also had very ambivalent feelings about his overseas travels. DuBois first visited Europe as a 23-year-old graduate student at the University of Berlin in 1892. He was overwhelmed and deeply moved by a white Dutch family's encouragement of his brief, but very intense romance with their daughter. He felt almost giddy with joy at such natural, unqualified acceptance. During the next spring, however, DuBois was deeply disturbed by an incident in Lubeck where a crowd of curious white men, women and children, upon seeing him in public, began "staring, gesticulating, jabbering," even chasing after him as he hastily retreated. "Anger welled up in DuBois' chest and a general feeling of homesickness that [was] terrible." Fifteen years later, as a mature and highly respected black intellectual and race leader, DuBois returned to Europe, where his reception resembled a triumphant journey. According to biographer David L. Lewis, "The emotional lift from the upper-middle-class European salons in which DuBois dined and conversed as an outstanding personality unstigmatized by color went a long way toward drawing poison from wounds he tried never to let show in America. In Europe, his confident bearing and reserve marked him as a gentleman, as a person whose prepossession elevated him above the common run of subjects and citizens of any country."13

In the early decades of the twentieth century, other black travelers to Europe recalled that they were frequently perceived as curiosities. Zatella Rowena Turner, a young, middle-class black woman, was awarded a year's study at the University of London by her college sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, in the mid-1930s. A few years later she published a glowing account of her trip abroad during which she had apparently experienced little, if any overt discrimination. Nevertheless, she commented, "I was ever mindful of the fact that as an American Negro living intimately with the English people, I was molding the Englishman's opinion of Negro Americans."14 In the same decade Dr. Thomas Peyton, a prominent Los Angeles doctor, embarked on several extended tours of Europe. He reported with some amusement his experience in a Parisian barber shop. "Upon my first visit for a haircut the barber gave unmistakable signs of joy at the prospect of cutting my hitherto despised kinky locks." Ironically, Peyton indulged in a bit of his own ethnic stereotyping: "With all the gestures accompanying a Latin temperament, frantically waving scissors and comb like the conductor of a symphony orchestra, he burst forth with exclamations, '... How beautiful—well frizzled! What a head of hair! It is magnificent.'" During a family visit to Hitler's Germany in 1937, Peyton recalled visiting small villages, where they were surrounded by curious onlookers. "As the tour progressed we were taken aback by the attention showered upon us. Few German farmers or villagers had ever seen a Negro."15

Like their white counterparts, when recounting their journeys, other black travelers occasionally lapsed into stereotyping of their own. Juanita Harrison, a middle-class woman from Los Angeles who traveled around the world in the mid-1930s recalled bargaining with Mediterranean merchants in numerous countries. She claimed that she used her French "... in a Jewish way and I can always Jew them down."16
If black travelers occasionally indulged in mild ethnic stereotyping, the fact remained that the vast majority of blacks, even those going abroad, were far more often the targets of such comments. Just like those using the railroads in the United States, many black travelers went to great lengths to avoid unpleasantness. This took enormous patience and planning, and it often resulted in the expenditure of extra funds. John P. Green, an Ohio lawyer and legislator, recalled an overseas trip he arranged in 1895: "I have a confession to make. It is that, for fear of being discriminated against, on account of being a colored man, I had shipped both when alone and when with my family, on a Cunarder, where I felt sure no proscription would be made . . ."17

George S. Schuyler, a noted journalist for the Pittsburgh Courier, recounted a trip to England in 1931. He made advance reservations in respectable hotels in several large cities, only to be informed repeatedly upon his arrival that "mistakes" had been made, and that they were full. Schuyler sometimes had to beg for third or fourth rate accommodations.18

However knowledgeable and sophisticated Mary Church Terrell became as a mature woman, as a youth she too encountered trouble with accommodations on the Continent. A white college friend had persuaded Terrell to spend some time with her at a pension in Berlin. Perhaps because her friend was already there, or perhaps because Terrell was very light-skinned, she checked in without incident. However, a few days later, the owner awkwardly approached Terrell and inquired about her race. By Terrell's account, some fellow Americans had "educated" the fraulein about race "etiquette" in their country, and the puzzled German felt compelled to question her guest. Terrell engaged in a lengthy discussion with her, at the end of which the innkeeper felt inclined to side with her. Nevertheless, Terrell naturally felt defeated and emotionally drained: "I told Faulein von Finck that I would not embarrass her by remaining under her roof another night. I felt that I could not retain any self-respect if I stayed another second in the same boarding house with two young men who were so full of prejudice against my race that they would drive from comfortable quarters a young colored girl who was alone in a foreign land three thousand miles from home."19

Other international travelers experienced similarly unsettling episodes. Robert S. Abbott, the flamboyant, very dark-skinned publisher of the influential Chicago Defender, had married a light-skinned "octofoon." Having accumulated a comfortable fortune by the early 1920s, Abbott decided to take his wife on a South American tour. South of the equator, the Abbots were often pleased to see "men and women of all complexions and intermediate shades mingling and moving in the daily currents of a full and active life." However, according to biographer Roi Ottley, the trip was marred by numerous stressful "incidents." In several countries, the Abbots were either refused previously reserved hotel accommodations, or they were asked to leave soon after they had arrived because white patrons allegedly objected to their presence. Helen Abbott later complained that everywhere they went, the couple was observed "as if they were a 'sideshow'." The same basic conditions prevailed in Europe, where they also traveled. Since Helen Abbott was very light skinned, she was often mistaken for white, and she repeatedly heard derogatory comments about blacks which were intended only for white ears. According to Ottley, Helen Abbott may have possessed a deeper awareness of foreign racism than her husband, and it caused stress in their re-
Far more than white Americans, blacks traveling abroad had to be particularly sensitive to local customs and mores, and they had to learn how to talk themselves into decent accommodations and out of potential conflicts. Diaries and autobiographical accounts of travels by well-heeled blacks repeatedly suggested that one of the most successful strategies for dealing with frequent personal affronts was to treat them as challenges, or contests of wits. Alexander Walters, a distinguished bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, described a five-day trip across the Mediterranean from Naples, Italy, to Alexandria, Egypt, in 1890. To his delight and great surprise, he had been installed in an exquisite stateroom, which he labeled a “bridal apartment.” No sooner had he settled in than the steward appeared and started speaking to him in Italian. Walters knew perfectly well that the steward was trying to get him to vacate his quarters, that he had supposedly been placed there by mistake. “I endeavored to make him understand by gesticulation that I did not comprehend his meaning. Finally I manufactured a language of my own, and in slow measured accents, looking him square in the face, I said: ‘Omfra schockto medo frala.’ . . . He looked at me in astonishment, as much to say: ‘Why, what language do you speak, anyhow?’ I took advantage of his ignorance to impress him with the fact that he had outraged my dignity, and with all the vehemence and rapidity possible I repeated the words. . . . The steward left me hastily and never returned.” Walters’ quick-witted bluff had worked.

Before World War II, the overwhelming majority of American blacks could only daydream about exotic adventures abroad. However, by the early twentieth century, increasing numbers of blacks were determined to overcome racial barriers and enjoy leisure in their own country. As Eugene Genovese, Herbert Gutman, Lawrence Levine and other scholars have noted, blacks had built a long tradition of finding or creating enjoyment under the most trying circumstances. Picnics, card games, impromptu jam sessions, baseball games, motion pictures, visits to amusement parks and any number of other diversions provided occasional, temporary relief from the stresses of oppressive segregation. Among themselves, free from scrutiny by contemptuous whites, blacks could relax and shed inhibitions. Yet well before the turn-of-the-century blacks were enjoying more formal recreation, extended outings, and even vacations. Some of them went in large groups. Historian John Blassingame observed that by the 1870s and 1880s black service and fraternal organizations in New Orleans were arranging day trips and overnight excursions on trains and river boats, complete with bands and other entertainment. According to Blassingame, such festivities on occasion included as many as 2,000 participants. Thus, they were by no means socially exclusive.

Through the remainder of the nineteenth century, however, affluent black families generally arranged their own vacations, mostly on an individual basis. In a biography of her father, a successful businessman and distinguished author Charles W. Chesnutt, Helen Chesnutt recounted several consecutive summer vacations which the entire family enjoyed in rural or lake front locations not far from their home in Cleveland. She mentioned several summers in the 1890s when “Susan [Mrs. Chesnutt] took the children into the country for the month of August. For several years they went to Saybrook, a little crossroads country town, about fifty miles east of Cleveland. Saybrook House, the village hotel, was a farmhouse owned by Mr. Munson, where the
children lived the wholesome and delightful life of country boys and girls. Charles . . . came down . . . [on the rail line] every Saturday afternoon, and remained until Monday morning.” The rural area contained few other blacks. Nearby whites did not feel threatened by a growing black population, which probably made it easier for the Chesnuts to gain acceptance. “[T]here was one colored family in Saybrook, the Richardsons. They shared the life of the community, took part in all the town’s activities . . . .” By the turn-of-the-century the Chesnuts had located beach front property on Lake Erie, which the family visited quite regularly during the summertime. Helen Chesnutt rhapsodized over one summer at Willoughby which “. . . was delightful—a cottage in an apple orchard, a fine bathing beach on Lake Erie, a rowboat, an ice cream freezer, blackberries in profusion.”

Such individualized arrangements obviously benefited very small numbers of particularly determined, resourceful black families. Furthermore, as Jim Crow practices tightened late in the nineteenth century, even the most resilient blacks experienced difficulties arranging vacations. Historian Willard B. Gatewood, Jr. observed that P. B. S. Pinchback, a Louisiana politician during Reconstruction, and several members of the “older generation” of black aristocrats, had enjoyed the attractions of Saratoga Springs, New York, in the 1870s and 1880s. This elite group of families included the Churches of Memphis, the Pelhams of Detroit and the Ruffins and Lewises of Boston. But as the old century closed, even the most affluent, genteel blacks found suitable accommodations at Saratoga Springs increasingly off-limits. They had to buy or build their own facilities. Gatewood noted that “cottages were [soon] doing a brisk business in the ‘Quartier de Africaine.’ For some years most upper-class vacationers at Saratoga stayed at the Thompson Cottage or the Jackson Cottage, two small, black-owned inns that provided acceptable accommodations.” By the 1890s blacks on the East Coast were also vacationing at their own resorts at Atlantic City and Cape May, New Jersey, and even one of the favorite retreats for the Gilded Age’s richest plutocrats, Newport, Rhode Island. Inland, there were quite modest, rustic black-owned resort facilities in Silcott Springs, Virginia, and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Early in the twentieth century, numerous black resort areas sprouted up near eastern cities with relatively large black populations. In 1901 distinguished writer Paul Dunbar described Arundel-on-the-Bay and Highland Beach [one and the same resort] close to Washington, DC “. . . taken up entirely and almost owned by ourselves. The place [is] a beach nearly two miles long with good bathing facilities and with a forest behind it, has been made and built up entirely by Negro capital.” Developing their own retreats appeared wise, as blacks were often gouged by greedy white entrepreneurs on those rare occasions when integrated facilities were available to them. In 1913 The Crisis reported just such a situation at Buckeye Lake, about thirty-three miles east of Columbus, Ohio. The “colored” Elks of Zanesville had sponsored a series of outings at a white-owned retreat which allegedly attracted some 20,000 visitors over a three week period. A white correspondent to the magazine commented at length upon the minuscule portions of poor food, indifferent and even sullen service, and outrageous prices charged to black patrons. He concluded, “Even a crook would recognize the injustice of this. For one white man I was ashamed of the selfishness of my race.”

How pleasant were the various types of tourist and travel facilities serving blacks? If one judged primarily on the basis of advertising copy in black newspapers and
mass-circulation magazines, one might get the erroneous impression that travelling blacks could easily find decent hotel accommodations and meals almost anywhere on the East Coast. *The Crisis* printed numerous advertisements for hotels serving the race. In a 1911 issue, Hotel Dale, in Cape May, New Jersey offered “one hundred light, airy and luxuriously furnished rooms with every modern convenience,” plus an “elegantly furnished dining room” which presented “cuisine . . . contain[ing] al the delicacies of the season, prepared by a master of the culinary arts.” Four years later, another issue of the magazine contained an advertisement for the Hotel Lincoln, on Long Island: “. . . within three minutes walk of the beach, where there are bathing, boating and fishing . . . magnificently appointed rooms, single or en suite. Every convenience to suit the most exacting.”

Such blandishments were typical, but they frequently promised more than they delivered. Gatewood observed that black patronage of certain “resort” areas depended, in large part, on the adequacy of overnight accommodations open to them. In many cases rooms were either unavailable or of exceedingly poor quality, and most black visitors enjoyed only day trips. According to Gatewood, “Cape May . . . declined in popularity because of the deteriorating conditions of black-owned inns and cottages.” Nevertheless, cities in the East attracted tens of thousands of black migrants, who needed some sort of recreational facilities. While some retreats fell into disrepair and lost favor, new areas emerged. For example, in the mid-1920s black promoters opened Barrett Beach in Port Monmouth, New Jersey. The fifty acre facility boasted 1,700 feet of beach front, with bath houses. The oasis must have been somewhat cramped and noisy, since it offered diverse attractions in a limited area. Visitors were frequently entertained at baseball games, mostly between regional black semi-pro teams. Barrett Beach also offered a movie house and a large pavilion, where jazz bands played to patrons on a dance floor.

In the East, travelling blacks occasionally had choices of facilities, but out West, hotel and other accommodations, when available at all, were extremely limited. For example, more than one black traveler found himself completely stranded in Salt Lake City. Even Los Angeles, with a black population approaching 40,000, did not offer a decent hotel for blacks until 1928, just before the city hosted the national NAACP convention. In that year the Hotel Somerville, located at 41st and Central Avenue, opened for business. Proud advertisements described it as four stories tall and a “well appointed” hotel, containing 100 rooms, 60 with private baths. It cost about $250,000 and contained some $35,000 in furnishings.

By the 1920s there were increasing opportunities for those promoting black leisure. The Great Migration was in full swing. Tens of thousands of rural southern blacks were moving into the heavy industrial cities in the Northeast and upper Midwest. The vast majority of them entered domestic service or became unskilled, or at best semi-skilled, factory hands; they were far more concerned with providing the basic necessities of life and new opportunities for their families than in formal leisure activities. Nevertheless, with black populations increasing rapidly in the urban Midwest, growing numbers of families possessed disposable income. Shrewd entrepreneurs realized that because a critical mass of potential black consumers had arrived in large cities, fortunes could be made providing goods and services just for blacks. Significantly, black
businessmen in many service industries no longer needed to rely heavily upon white good will and patronage.31

Among newly emerging opportunities for astute entrepreneurs was providing places where affluent blacks could escape mounting urban pressures. In response, at least two new resorts were founded near Lake Michigan in the years immediately preceding World War I. By 1910 the West Michigan Resort near Benton Harbor included bathing facilities, nine common buildings, and a number of privately owned cottages. According to Gatewood, patronage at the retreat was dominated initially by “dignified and conservative” older elites, many from Chicago and Detroit. The “old” and “genteel” elites in many northern cities were being challenged for leadership by less socially polished, but assertive professionals and new entrepreneurs. These groups did not mix well in resorts. As “newer” black elites, considered “upstart nobodies” by some of the older aristocrats, began buying property at the West Michigan Resort, a number of those who identified with the latter group sought more remote locations for extended relaxation.32

This was the backdrop for the founding of Idlewild, Michigan, which eventually became the most renowned black resort in the Midwest. In fact, the property was originally purchased by four white men who founded the Idlewild Resort Company (IRC) in 1912. Historian Benjamin C. Wilson noted that the promoters merged idealism and capitalism. The corporation acquired 2,700 acres of “cutover timberland,” including Lake Idlewild. The property was somewhat remote, at least in the early years, being located sixty-nine miles north of Grand Rapids. By 1915, the white developers had recruited black salesmen to sell some 19,000 twenty-five-by-one hundred foot lots, originally priced at $35 each. The terms were $6 down and $1 per month, no interest. Some prospective black buyers were initially suspicious of the venture on account of white domination of decision making in the early years. However, none other than W.E.B. DuBois investigated the situation and gave his stamp of approval to the white promoters and to the chosen site. “For sheer physical beauty, for sheen of water and golden air, for nobleness of tree and shrub, for shining river . . . and all the wide leisure of rest and play—can you imagine a more marvelous thing than Idlewild?” DuBois also purchased some lots, although he never built on his property and later sold it. By 1921 the IRC turned the resort over to the property owners’ association, and blacks fully controlled its later development.33

Despite the typical fanfare accompanying establishment of Idlewild, the resort developed quite slowly. It wasn’t really a going concern until the early 1920s. Original “settlers” at Idlewild evidently enjoyed “roughing it,” living in tents pitched over wooden floors, which they nicknamed “dog houses.” Within a few years, other buyers were constructing tiny “bungalows.” Later, increasing numbers of property owners brought in outside contractors to build fancier living quarters. Casual visitors, prospective buyers and others who had not yet developed their property could stay at one of several nearby inns. Meals were sold at the spacious, informal Idlewild club house. Most visitors sought escape from summer heat in the cities and enjoyed hiking, horseback riding, boating, swimming and fishing. Not all were rugged outdoorsmen, and visitors could relax in the club house, enjoying reading and card games. Helen Chesnutt wrote an idyllic account of the lifestyle at Idlewild. Her father built a luxuriously furnished cabin and thoroughly enjoyed vacationing there in his later years. Gatewood
noted that the resort eventually became "something of a summer cultural mecca, attracting concert artists and lecturers of national prominence." By the onset of the Depression, Idlewild was well established, and according to historian Benjamin Wilson "... it emerged as a vital spot on the 'chitterling circuit' for fledgling young black entertainers" between the 1920s and 1950s. Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Sammy Davis, Jr., Sarah Vaughn, Dinah Washington and other notable entertainers performed at the Flamingo Club, Paradise Club, and other all-night spots. According to another source, at its peak in the 1940s, the summertime population at Idlewild occasionally swelled to 22,000.34

The 1910s and 1920s marked the emergence of numerous other black resorts and health retreats in the Midwest. In February, 1915 an advertisement in the Chicago Defender described the Hotel Waddy, in West Baden, Indiana, "... the only place where YOU can get the mineral water bath treatments. Rates are $1.50-$2.50 per day, American Plan." Promoters for this facility hoped to capitalize on the fact that blacks were unwelcome at other spas in southern Indiana; their comfortable hotel provided an oasis. Numerous celebrities responded to the call. Joe Louis and other noted black boxers used the Waddy Hotel for preliminary training headquarters in the 1940s. Another notice mentioned the Crittendon Hotel and the Pythian Bath House in Hot Springs, Arkansas, "... two popular hotels which bid fair to become a Chicago colony."35 Another publication promoted the Mt. Clemons Hotel and Mineral Baths in Mt. Clemons, Michigan, "... open the year round for the treatment of rheumatism and nervous diseases in all their various forms." In 1927 The Crisis included several notices of new retreats, including "A Negro summer resort at Lake Ivanhoe, Wisconsin," which "... includes among its attractions boating, swimming, horseback riding, fishing and tennis. The lake is situated five miles from the famous Lake Geneva and should prove a popular summer retreat."36

The late 1920s and the 1930s witnessed the early development of other scattered black resorts in the region. One was located at Fox Lake, near Angola, Indiana. Its roots were similar to those of Idlewild, in that white investors specifically intended to merchandise their property to blacks from the start, and they discouraged whites from moving into the area. Unlike Idlewild, the Fox Lake resort area was somewhat loosely managed, and blacks apparently never gained formal control of the corporation selling the real estate. However, Fox Lake offered all of the usual water sports and "... along with a hotel and restaurant, the lake’s shoreline boasted a dance hall, bathhouse, tennis courts and nearby trails for horseback riding." Even during the Depression and well beyond World War II, hundreds of blacks migrated to the area during the summer months, and many of them remembered it fondly as a "lively place."37 At approximately the same time another promoter purchased the entire south shore of Lake Adney, in Crow Wing County, located about three hours by car northwest of Minneapolis. Lots were wedge shaped, so that each would offer direct access to the water. According to one account, the resort became a favorite retreat for many blacks in the Twin Cities. Yet another resort, the Cedar Country Club, thrived even in the Depression. Located near Cleveland, the $100,000 facility situated on 160 acres included cottages, a dance hall, a tennis court, baseball diamond, clubhouse, banquet room and riding stables.38
Although most black resorts and recreational areas were clustered in the Atlantic Coast states and the Midwest, there were widely scattered black meccas in other parts of the nation. Historian Richard Bardolph mentioned a black retreat in Gulf Port, Mississippi, "...a sort of Negro Chautauqua resort." It was opened in 1923 by Bishop Robert E. Jones of the AME Church and attracted numerous large groups whose visits combined business and pleasure. Blacks also established retreats in the Rocky Mountains. In the mid-1920s, promoters began developing Lincoln Hills in Pine Cliff, Colorado, a two hour drive by automobile from Denver. Its founders offered mountain lots at reasonable prices, and one O. W. Hamlet built a lodge and several cabins which he rented to guests. The resort was known in Denver's black community as Winks Panoramic Lodge, and the surrounding area offered not only stunning scenery but plenty of space for picnics, camping, fishing and hiking.39

In the pre-World War II period, successful black resort promoters generally either had to select extremely remote property for development or find less desirable areas closer to large cities which were not coveted by whites. Efforts to establish resorts or recreational facilities near areas favored and utilized by large numbers of whites frequently led to trouble. Historian Lawrence B. DeGraaf documented the repeated failures of black promoters to set up havens for blacks in and near Los Angeles during the 1920s. In 1922 rumors of a proposed black bathhouse and amusement center in Santa Monica induced the town council to prohibit their construction. The same council also closed an existing black dance hall. Three years later, enterprising blacks began building the Pacific Beach Club in Huntington Beach. However, when the structures were almost finished, they mysteriously burned down. Blacks had owned property in Manhattan Beach since 1911, but by the mid-1920s local Ku Klux Klan pressure was sufficient to drive them off the beaches, if not completely out of the area. In 1928 blacks gained control of a white country club in Corona, near Los Angeles, but the venture collapsed during the Depression.40

Even when blacks arranged outings or established resorts in comparatively remote areas, they were never completely free of the fear of unpleasant confrontations with whites. In the 1920s prosperous Atlanta realtor Cornelius King purchased a summer home at Kennesaw, Georgia, surrounded by forty-seven acres of land. Regularly inundated by weekend guests from Atlanta, he perceived the potential for creating a money-making venture. King built a number of guest cabins, a spring-fed artificial lake and tennis facilities. There was also an outdoor dance pavilion, offering live music on weekend evenings. "King's Wigwam" soon became a favorite retreat for affluent Georgians blacks. Although white property owners surrounded the black resort, there apparently was no trouble for several years. The Kings shopped at white-owned stores in town and always paid their bills promptly. They may even have approached a feeling of security and wellbeing. Unfortunately, this idyllic retreat experienced a short life. A young black visitor was accused of raping a white girl from the village, and the Kings soon learned that the Ku Klux Klan was on the prowl. They smuggled the young fugitive out of the area in the trunk of a car, and paying guests and the King family literally abandoned the property that night. Shortly thereafter, King sold the "Wigwam" at a loss.41

For decades traveling blacks had resented the enervating discrimination they experienced on most railroads. They enthusiastically welcomed an early twentieth century
alternative means of touring: the automobile. Like white travelers, they hoped that the horseless carriage would serve as a liberating device, permitting them to establish their own timetables and change destinations at their whim. Without question, many prosperous blacks enjoyed the freedom of the open road. On occasion, they even experienced courteous and helpful treatment by whites along the road. Charles Chesnutt recalled getting a flat tire within eyesight of a little general store in upper New York state during the summer of 1917. A number of white men were idling outside the store, conversing and chewing tobacco. As the well-dressed author consulted a manual on how to change a tire, one or two of them casually sauntered over to appraise the situation. If Chesnutt expected trouble, it failed to arrive. After expressing amazement that the city-bred Chesnutt needed a book to tell him how to fix a flat, one of the men said, “‘You don’t need a book, Mister, we’ll fix the tire for you. Come on boys!’ During the time the tire was being repaired, one of the men murmur in disbelief, ‘A book to fix the tire, by gosh’.”

If Chesnutt was inexperienced with hand tools, he was highly adept at using his wits. During the same automobile trip to the East, the Chesnutts experienced the same type of friendly assistance when inquiring into the whereabouts of a good eatery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. A cordial white directed them to the best restaurant in town, where they were seated promptly without incident. Not long afterward, Chesnutt observed the manager looking closely at the table, then bearing down on them. Without hesitation, he immediately began speaking to his daughters in French, and the manager, evidently assuming they were foreigners, retreated in confusion.

Like their white counterparts, many black automobile owners felt a sense of escape and adventure when they got on the open road, temporarily removed from daily tensions. One correspondent for a national magazine noted in 1933 “… it’s mighty good to be the skipper for a change, and pilot our craft whither and where we will. We feel like Vikings. What if our craft is blunt of nose and limited of power and our sea is macadamized; it’s good for the spirit to just give the old railroad Jim Crow the laugh.” Journeying by auto gave some black motorists a vantage point from which to assess the absurdity and self-defeating characteristics of segregation. A correspondent to The Crisis conveyed a sense of satisfaction he achieved on a series of extended automobile outings from Jacksonville, Florida, in 1929. He stressed the ability of black motorists to avoid some segregation. “In fact, the only discrimination that we chanced upon was one at which we heartily laughed: a filling station on the Jacksonville-Daytona road had a sign ‘For white trade only.’ We passed it four times and saw no single car there. ‘These Crackers persist in being fools,’ says my companion.”

Nevertheless, for inexperienced black motorists, “pleasure” trips could quickly turn into unpleasant ordeals. In addition to numerous mechanical breakdowns and flat tires, poor roads, frequent detours and uncertain ferry schedules, black motorists encountered obstacles and challenges unknown by their white brethren. One of the most unnerving was figuring out local racial customs and etiquette in unfamiliar locales. Even in the Deep South, segregation practices varied considerably from town to town. Behavior which was acceptable in one town might plunge the unwary traveler into deep trouble five miles farther down the road. Purchasing gasoline was a brief, impersonal transaction; most white service station operators willingly accepted cash from black motorists. But securing decent food and lodging on the road was more problematical.
One tourist noted that when travelling long distances, black motorists generally felt most “free” in the mornings, that during the early hours a “small cloud” was almost unnoticeable, “... but as the afternoon wears on, it casts a shadow of apprehension on our hearts and sours us a little. ‘Where,’ it asks us, ‘will you stay tonight?’” Often, black motorists spent hours searching for any type of lodgings, sometimes being forced to sleep in haylofts or even in their cars. Although many careful black travelers made advance plans to spend the night with friends in other cities, this precaution robbed them of the luxury of spontaneity. As one experienced traveler put it, “... somehow it takes the joy out of gypsying about when you have to be at a certain place by a certain time.”

When traveling by automobile rather than on the railroads, it was difficult to locate edible food. Author J. Saunders Redding recalled an auto trip through the South during World War II. He was getting very hungry, so he started searching for a meal. After being rebuffed at numerous roadside eateries, he finally approached a ramshackle greasy spoon diner. A slatternly white waitress allowed him to sit, but otherwise she treated him with thinly-veiled contempt. There was nothing listed on the menu that Redding wanted, so he finally asked the waitress to bring whatever she had. He described the meal as a “hard curled rind of fried bacon and bacon grease poured over a glutinous mound of gray grits and an egg black from frying in stale grease. She also brought a heavy cup of thick coffee and a cold slab of shortbread.” An experienced black traveler suggested in 1933 that one remedy for the hazards of automobile journeys would be a national directory of hotels, campsites, eateries and other services which welcomed black patrons. As the number of black motorists increased, a useful directory finally appeared. The first edition of The Negro Motorist Green Book, published in 1936, promised to “give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments, and to make his trip more enjoyable.”

Nevertheless, black motorists discovered that it was still easy to encounter trouble even when pursuing the most innocent pleasures. Civil Rights leader James Farmer never forgot the rage and shame he felt as a seven-year-old over a 1927 incident his family experienced “on the road.” His father was an administrator at Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi. The family had motored a short distance from home and was enjoying an outdoor picnic. They were confronted by two “red-necks” on foot who claimed that Farmer’s father had run over one of their hogs with his auto. The family was firmly settled in Holly Springs, and the elder Farmer was acutely aware of the power and influence of the local Ku Klux Klan. Rather than expose his family to further danger, either at the scene or in the future, he submissively pulled out a check for $57, which represented a full month’s pay, and endorsed it over to one of the white men. In a similar incident, Frank Snowden, a distinguished scholar who had earned his Ph.D at Northwestern University, recounted a trip to the South in the mid-1930s. A white service station attendant in Concord, North Carolina overcharged him by $0.28. “When Snowden mentioned his slip, the outraged mechanic threatened to kill him with a crowbar, but then relented far enough to vent his rage by pouring twenty-eight cents worth of gas on Snowden’s car and profanely ordering him off.” Needless to say, Snowden sought no redress from local authorities.
Traveling by automobile after dark in the South could be particularly dangerous, as Mamie Fields discovered in the late 1920s. She and her husband were driving down a remote country road, when they rounded a curve and suddenly ran into a Ku Klux Klan roadblock. The couple was ordered from the car at gunpoint and surrounded by white-robed men with burning torches. Naturally, the Fields were terrified. The intimidating Klansmen went through their luggage and inspected their trunk. “All this time, nobody said a word to us. We stood there by our guards, in the light of the torches. Prisoners. After a long while, one of them said, ‘You are not the ones. You can go.’ And that was that. What Negro family were ‘the ones,’ what it was all about, Bob and I never knew.”48 Even in terms of observing driving etiquette, blacks had to be careful. As one historian noted, in the Delta region, “custom forbade black drivers to overtake vehicles driven by whites on unpaved roads.” The reason was that they might stir up dust which would get on whites.49

Fields also recalled that blacks driving fancy cars were particularly irresistible targets for trouble-making whites. She recounted the tale of her affluent cousin driving down south in a shiny new Buick or Cadillac and being stopped by a white policeman for some trivial offense. Her cousin wisely remained silent, letting him talk himself out, agreeing with everything he said, then waiting until he levied a specific fine. The policeman, evidently figured he could jail an “uppity nigra,” but such would not be the case. “When Naomi counted out enough cash money to pay the fine, the policeman’s eyes popped out. . . . There was nothing left for him to do but take all that money from a ‘nigra’ and let her go. My Lord, how we used to laugh when Naomi told that story.”50

Fields’ commentary was revealing at several levels. Here was a stark account of an affluent, educated, well-dressed, respectful black woman being dominated by a lowbrow white sheriff, being forced to appear submissive and think quickly enough to outwit him. Although Fields’ cousin paid a large, unjustified fine, she felt fortunate to avoid jail, or even worse treatment. In recounting the tale in later years, what many would have chosen to hide as simply another example of humiliation became a chestnut family lore. The Fields family obviously understood the significance of the incident at a deeper level. It clearly reflected the fact that through such mental, emotional and psychological gymnastics, many alert, sensitive blacks developed superb survival skills. Fields’ vignette about her cousin’s confrontation with the law also symbolized many blacks’ determination to emphasize the positive side of life and find enjoyment even against long odds.

In the early twentieth century, large numbers of blacks shared whites’ interest in sports such as baseball, albeit on separate diamonds. However, leisure sports with elitist or upper class overtones such as golf appeared lily white, almost beyond reach. Although the origins of golf in the British Isles went back at least as far as the early 1600s, the slowly evolving game did not appear in the United States until the late nineteenth century. At the turn-of-the-century there still was just a scattering of golf clubs, most of them privately-owned and located near large eastern cities. Successful American amateurs like Francis Ouimet and Bobby Jones helped popularize the game in the 1910s and 1920s. As suburban development proliferated after World War I, hundreds of new golf courses replaced former orchards and cow pastures.
A few enterprising blacks expressed early interest in the game. In February, 1916 *The Crisis* mentioned a group of black men promoting Douglas Park, near Pleasantville, New Jersey, as a “golf links and pleasure resort.” However, there were no follow-up stories and evidently the planned retreat never got off the ground. Another group of blacks in Connecticut claimed to have opened the first golf club catering to their race in 1917. Unfortunately, traces of these initiatives have largely vanished. Nevertheless, by the early 1920s there was considerable evidence of active black participation in the sport, particularly in the East. *The Crisis* noted in November, 1922 that the Shady Rest Country Club had been founded in Westfield, New Jersey; it featured a nine-hole gold course and had 200 members. A newspaper story written seventy years later identified Shady Rest as “the first private country club for blacks in the country,” noting that over several decades the club attracted many celebrities from Harlem and “became a centerpiece for black social life.”

Although blacks controlled Shady Rest during the 1920s and 1930s, they did not find it. In 1897 a group of whites purchased the farm land on which it was located and developed the Westfield Golf Club. By the early 1920s, however, the club was bordered on two sides by predominantly black neighborhoods, and the whites consented to lease the grounds to interested black citizens in 1921. A white reporter from the New York *Sun* ventured out to the site in 1922 and described the scene patronizing terms: “In faultless white flannels and impeccable nickers [sic] they [the black members] sit upon the veranda consuming lemonade and ice cream and discuss the important social events of the day. How come? What strange combination of circumstances brought this social cataclysm to pass in the heart of aristocratic Union County?” In 1991 a retired black business executive recalled the ambience of Shady Rest in the mid-1930s, calling it “something unique. . . . There was no other place open to us. The people could go there and feel that they owned it. They could do the same things the white people did at the white clubs. There was a sense of pride.”

Several other groups of blacks on the East Coast founded golf clubs in the 1920s. The November, 1924 issue of *The Crisis* contained a photograph of the Colored Country Club of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Two years later the same source announced that “Prominent colored men of Washington and Baltimore have combined to establish the National Capitol Country Club. They have secured a club house at Edge Hill, Maryland, with 19 large rooms, a dining room that will seat 65, and a spacious dance floor. The house is situated on 23 acres of land on which improvements are rapidly being made, including a nine hole gold course and five tennis courts.” If the nine hole course was actually confined to less than twenty-three acres, its dimensions were extremely tight. However, the club thrived for a time. A 1927 photograph taken on location showed more than three dozen men and women in sporting clothes, many holding golf clubs.

Far more than their white brethren, blacks suffered sever economic hardship during the Great Depression, and a number of black resorts and country clubs either folded or suffered significant financial shortages and dwindling membership. The golf club in Corona, California failed, and the Shady Rest Club in New Jersey was taken over by the township of Scotch Plains in 1938 through tax lien foreclosures. Nevertheless, blacks continued to enjoy the game when presented with the opportunity. In 1939 and 1940, the Chicago *Defender* printed a number of stories about prominent black men...
and women participating in golf tournaments on several public courses scattered about the Chicago suburbs. Judging from their posted eighteen hole scores of well over one hundred strokes per round, many of the female participants were comparative newcomers at the game. However, several clearly possessed considerable familiarity with the challenges of golf. In reporting the Chicago Women’s Golf Club’s annual tournament in 1940, the Defender noted that club president Anna Mae Black broke 100 at Palos Hills for the first time, shooting a 98 for the 19 hole competition. Local women’s tournaments were usually limited to single eighteen hole rounds, but the men’s competitions were often spread over several days. Chicago hosted the National Amateur Golf Association tournament over three days in August, 1940. Such tournaments were usually “national” only in the sense that organizers welcomed entries from anywhere. Local men and women usually captured the prizes.54

Tennis was actually more popular than golf among blacks with sufficient leisure time, perhaps in large part due to the fact that interested participants could organize clubs and set up courts much more quickly and on far less real estate. Tennis clubs also required less initial capital and cost less to maintain. In addition, a set or two of tennis took less time and provided more exercise than a round of golf. Scattered photographs from family albums show well-dressed black females in long dresses on tennis courts at the turn-of-the-century. A field writer for the Chicago Defender claimed that significant numbers of blacks began playing tennis in 1890. “Men and women, intimate personal friends, in the larger cities engaged in games, and teachers in colleges, normal schools and high schools played tennis for exercise and social contact.” He also noted that “later, city and state contests became annual affairs, and, in 1898, an interstate tournament was held in Philadelphia under the auspices of the Chautauqua Tennis Club of that city.”55

By 1916 sufficient numbers of avid black tennis players existed to form the American Tennis Association (ATA) in Washington, DC. According to The Crisis, the association hosted its first national tournament in Baltimore in 1917. By 1924 there were seventy-nine local ATA groups from twenty-five states, representing about 1,000 members. The 1924 national tournament, held again in Baltimore, lasted nearly a week and attracted a total of 314 entrants. The next year, the tournament was held in Bordentown, New Jersey, and the finals allegedly attracted “a crowd of about fifteen hundred enthusiasts . . . [who were] thrilled time and again by the wonderful display of tennis.”56

Although several more decades would pass before most major amateur and professional tournaments permitted blacks to compete with any regularity against the best white players, blacks and whites occasionally faced each other across the nets. The Defender eagerly anticipated a match between national ATA champion Jimmy McDaniel and leading white professional Don Budge in 1940. Budge easily disposed of his opponent in straight sets, 6-1 and 6-2. That same year, the Tuskegee Institute varsity tennis team was invited to an international tennis competition in Nassau, in the Bahamas, “under the distinguished patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.” Unfortunately, the reporter failed to provide any further details of the Tuskegee team’s experience.57

Blacks were captivated by yet another sport which became a national rage in the late nineteenth century: cycling. Before the 1880s bicycling was generally limited to
the young and very athletic, as the storied high-wheelers were potentially dangerous and quite difficult to master. One expert noted that there were about 100,000 high wheelers in the nation by 1887. The introduction of the low riding safety bicycle by Albert Pope in the mid-1880s revolutionized the sport’s appeal. Americans could not get enough of the devices; by 1896 there were over four million safety bicycles in use.58 Bicycling became one of the first clearly identifiable national sporting fads, and a powerful organization, the League of American Wheelmen, soon became one of the leading advocates of improved roads and streets. Although blacks were clearly not welcome as members of most local chapters of the league, they avidly pursued the sport on their own. Numerous family photograph albums feature well-dressed late nineteenth century black men and women posing proudly with their safety bicycles, just as their children would be photographed behind the wheels of Model-T Fords a generation later. Blacks occasionally competed against whites in one of the first highly popular spectator sports, bicycle racing. In fact, renowned black cyclist and speed racer Marshall W. Taylor held a number of world records between 1898 and 1904. However, his autobiography recounts numerous cases in which race officials and fellow competitors sought to gain unfair advantages or engaged in overt cheating.59

The impact of World War II and its aftermath upon race relations has been analyzed by hundreds of scholars and popular writers. Sports and leisure activities were clearly of central importance in the emergence of the modern Civil Rights Movement, beginning with Jackie Robinson’s appearance in a Brooklyn Dodgers uniform in 1947. Race relations have evolved in fits and starts over the past half century. Ugly, recent confrontations such as the Los Angeles riot of 1992 and reactions to the O. J. Simpson verdict divided largely along racial lines confirm the sticky persistence of racism in the United States. Affluent blacks, as well as their less fortunate brethren, still face daily “reminders” of their race, however unintended or “subtle” such indications might be.

Nevertheless, most blacks presently under the age of fifty could hardly imagine the struggle their parents and grandparents experienced in order to enjoy the fruits of labor. The black bons vivants of a century ago who were determined to enjoy their wealth experienced almost constant tension if they chose to pursue leisure activities in public. No wonder most affluent blacks preferred the safety of entertaining behind closed doors in private homes. In many ways more intriguing were those brave pioneers who persisted in pursuing the finer things in life in public, despite repeated rejection, hostile environments, and even physical danger. They witnessed little progress in gaining widespread acceptance during the first half of the twentieth century; in some cases, as their wealth increased, they saw barriers raised even higher. They persisted nevertheless. With a few exceptions, historians generally associate black leaders with martyrdom, or with years of toil and sacrificing directly connected to promoting the most basic, obvious racial “causes.” This is, no doubt, appropriate; but wealthy blacks who demonstrated by their own example that all humans had the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor at any time and anywhere on the world stage also advanced the universal quest for human dignity.
NOTES


2 For a full treatment of the legal battle, see Charles A. Lofgren, The Plessy Case: A Legal-Historical Perspective (New York, 1987).

3 Providing a precise, quantifiable definition of “prosperous” would be close to impossible. Certainly it is as much a part of one’s state of mind as it is a measurable financial condition. I do intend to distinguish between “prosperous” blacks and those who generally possessed enough disposable income only for a few hours of release. While some affluent blacks enjoyed entertainment intended largely for the masses, such as baseball games, vaudeville, jazz, motion pictures and amusement parks, the pursuits discussed in this essay generally separated them from the overwhelming majority of their brethren. Other scholars have wrestled with the definition and/or significance of black classes and “society.” The topic has received attention from eminent social scientists such as Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem in Modern Democracy (New York, 1944) and E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of the New Middle Class (New York, 1957) to popular historians like Stephen Birmingham, Certain People: America’s Black Elite (Boston, 1977). Other scholars treating these issues include John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 1860-1880 (Chicago and London, 1973) and George C. Wright, Life Behind the Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930 (Baton Rouge and London, 1985). In examining the emergence of black urban culture in a half-dozen southern states, Howard N. Rabinowitz stresses the distinctive, unique features of black urban culture in each city. See Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (Urbana; University of Illinois Press: 1978). Douglas Daniels argues that San Francisco provided a comparatively friendly reception for blacks who migrated to the West Coast. See Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco (Philadelphia, 1980). The 1960s and 1970s brought an outpouring of solid monographs assessing the emergence of ghettos in northern and eastern cities. While none of these works provided in-depth analysis of black elites, the authors were virtually unanimous in stating the negative impact of turn-of-the-century “scientific” racism and the Great Migration on whites’ acceptance, or tolerance, of “old” black elites. David M. Katzman, Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century (Urbana, Illinois, 1973) and Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana, Illinois, 1976) provide some of the most useful commentary on the declining status of older black elites. A particularly useful and illuminating nationwide study of black elites is Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920 (Bloomington, Indiana, 1990).

4 See, for example, Wright, Life Behind the Veil, 131. For more analysis of blacks and voluntary associations and club life, see William A. Muraskin, Middle Class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America (Berkeley; University of California Press: 1975); 32-41; Loretta J. Williams, Black Freemasonry and Middle Class Realities (Columbia, 1980); Gerda Lerner, “Early Community Work of Black Club Women,” Journal of Negro History 59 (April, 1974): 158-174; Nicholas Babchuk and Ralph V. Thompson, “The Voluntary Associations of Negroes,” American Sociological Review 27 (October, 1962): 647-652.

5 Gatewood provided excellent treatment of black elites’ establishment of separate educational institutions. See Aristocrats of Color, 254-263. See also Birmingham, Certain People 8,12,150.


9 The very extensive Mary Church Terrell Papers at the Library of Congress contain dozens of letters detailing her impressions of her journeys abroad.


14 Zatella Rowena Turner, My Wonderful Year (Boston, 1939): 69.


John P. Green, *Fact Stranger Than Fiction* (Cleveland, 1920): 86.


*Chicago Defender*, February 13, 1915 and February 20, 1915.


“Going to the Lake” (undated pamphlet, Minnesota Historical Society), 17-18.


Birmingham, *Certain People*, 237-238.


Smith, “Through the Windshield,” 143.


*Chicago Defender*, June 20, 1940; *Ibid.*, July 27, 1940. There was a golf tour for black golf professionals under the auspices of the United Golf Association (UGA), which was founded in 1928. The UGA held a National Open Tournament annually, plus scattered tournaments, where a few dozen professionals competed for modest cash prizes, usually $250-$400 for the winner. Another black golf organization catering more to amateurs was the Eastern Golf Association, which also staged tournaments. See Al Barkow, *The History of the PGA Tour* (New York, 1989): 98-99.

*Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1937.


